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ABSTRACT

Major conceptual concerns guiding contemporary political socialization research with children and adolescents are: content of value orientations; nature of the political learning process; sources or agents from which the young acquire their orientations; the acquisition of political and non-political values/skills; impingement of non-political personal characteristics on the development of social and political value orientations; temporal qualities of life cycle and generational variations; spatial qualities of cross-nation and intra-national variations; and implications of value formation and development for the political system. In their desire to comprehend the modal, functional patterns of political behavior in our society, most investigators have avoided the more pathologic aspects of political socialization. The last half of the paper focuses on high school seniors, their exposure to social studies courses, and the impact of these courses on their political orientations. The author concludes that until such changes in goals, course content, pedagogical methods, timing of exposure, teacher training, and school environmental factors are made, one must continue to expect little contribution from the formal civics curriculum in the political socialization of American pre-adults. (Author/VLW)

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# POLITICAL LEARNING IN THE SCHOOLS: AN OVERVIEW AND A SPECIAL VIEW*

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At least since the time of Plato educators and political leaders have been concerned with the problem of inculcating the young with the proper norms and practices of citizenship. Whether the polity be democratic or totalitarian, advanced or backward, established or emergent, the importance of political socialization on the functioning of the system cannot be denied, even though it may have different consequences. Despite its seeming importance, only in recent years have scholars begun the systematic investigation of political socialization and its effects. In this paper I will 1) briefly review the major perspectives and results from leading studies of children and adolescents; and 2) treat in some detail the nature and consequences of formal instruction at the secondary school level.

## The Relevance and Concern of Political Socialization

Three major sources may be identified as contributing to the recent explosion of interest in political socialization. One stream of thought influencing heavily the precise aspects of study objectives flows from the substantial amount of research reporting on citizenship values and practices among American adults. On a national scale, much of the early work was carried out by the Survey Research Center of the University of Michigan (e.g., Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes, 1960; Converse and Dupeux, 1962; Miller and Stokes, 1963). Additional reported research stemmed

directly from secondary analysis of data gathered by S.R.C. (e.g., Key, 1961; Milbrath, 1965; Lane, 1965). Still other major studies have plumbed the depths of adult political behavior (e.g., Stouffer, 1955; Almond and Verba, 1963; Matthews and Prothro, 1966).

These and related studies have been extremely useful in delineating the political world of the adult. Various components of adult behavior--sense of citizen obligation, belief in the efficacy of individual action, cynicism toward politics, sophistication in comprehension of government, ideological commitment or preference--can be specified with some confidence because of their known contribution to adult behavior. It has become apparent, however, that practical and theoretical questions about the acquistion of political values and the development and employment of political skills cannot be adequately answered on the basis of adult-level data only. While the adult studies spotlight key political orientations and provide useful benchmarks against which pre-adults may be compared, they inform us very little about the wellsprings of such orientations. Tapping these orientations at the pre-adult stage should permit us to comprehend in a much more significant way the formation of political values and skills, and how this relates to the functioning of the political system.

Another cluster of ideas leading to the objectives of political socialization research emanates primarily from normative models of citizenship behavior as embodied in various goals of the educational system and in the political community at large. Although some disagreement exists about

the functional consequences of certain modes of citizen behavior--high participation versus low participation for example--it is nevertheless true that one of the abiding goals of both formal and informal civic education has been to encourage and develop loyal, participative citizens and to equip them with tools for making "rational" judgments (Patterson, 1960; Fenton, 1967; Mehlinger, 1967). Indeed, it has been argued by theorists that a key mode of maintaining political systems lies in the orderly transmission of political orientations from generation to generation, the development of commitment and support to the political community at a relatively early stage in the individual's life span (Easton, 1965, 1966; Almond and Coleman, 1960).

Research into learning phenomena associated with political education has often focussed on how much and what was learned under given pedagogical methods and formats. Studies at the college level seriously question the ability of course content to alter greatly political values (Somit, et al., 1958; Schick and Somit, 1963; Jacob, 1957), but it seems likely that these effects would be much more in evidence among pre-college populations. For example, in a quasi-experimental study of the effects of curriculum it was found that both the course content and community-school characteristics had an effect on the shaping of orientations (Litt, 1963). However, the conflicting conclusion of Easton and Hess (1962) that formal civic instruction at the high school level had little impact on previously held values and attitudes indicates that considerably more research is necessary before such questions can be resolved. I will return to this general topic in the final section of the paper.

The degree to which the schools and other agents succeed in meeting these goals of normative orientations--however ambiguously defined--is not at all clear, although a number of small-scale studies and experiments have been reported (e.g., Dimond, 1951; Edgar, 1951; Grambs, 1956; Wilson, 1938; Litt, 1963, Bond, 1962; Kemp, 1963; Lippit, 1960). Various pedagogic approaches and results have been summarized by Cox and Cousin (1965) for social studies instruction in general, and by Lunstrom (1965) with respect to the teaching of controversial topics. The conclusions of these studies are often hampered by their lack of systematic inquiry and generalizing power to broader universes of students. What is clearly needed is research which provides for generalization on a large scale, across many schools and families, and over a great variety of students.

A third set of interests which has precipitated a keen interest in political socialization lies in the study of political development, nation-building, and comparative politics. Scholars in these areas began to see part of the explanation for system growth, decay, and change as originating in the socialization of the young (e.g., Pye and Verba, 1965; Ward and Rustow, 1964; Geertz, 1963, Almond and Coleman, 1960; Almond and Verba, 1963). Although truly comparative studies of political socialization are still scarce, there is every prospect that this will be overcome in the years to come. Obviously, the more we learn about other political entities, the sharper becomes our grasp of the American scene.

Several common themes are found, in varying degrees, as one assays the recent and emerging scholarship in political socialization. To be specific, the study of political socialization may be subdivided into a number of

specific areas.[1] These seem to be the major conceptual concerns guiding contemporary research.

1. The content of the value orientations--a) the kinds of orientations, often expressed in the familiar triptych of affective, cognitive, and evaluative orientations; b) the objects learned about, e.g., governmental agents, laws, and norms of behavior, sanction systems, systemic relationships, and so forth.

2. The nature of the political learning process--e.g., rates of learning, continuities and discontinuities, direct and indirect processes, sources of initiative, levels of abstraction.

3. The sources or agents from which the young acquire their orientations, and the relative and differentiated impact of these agents, viz., the family, peers, secondary and societal groups, mass media, teachers, and curriculum. The complementary versus conflicting cues emitted from such agents is of special interest.

4. The acquisition of political compared with non-political values and skills. For example, is the former sui generis or may it be described by more general theories. This is essentially a micro-level question of obvious relevance to the educational system.

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[1]The following borrows from Jack Dennis, "Major Problems of Political Socialization Research," Midwest Journal of Political Science, 22 (February, 1968), 85-114.

5. The impingement of non-political personal characteristics on the development of social and political value orientations--e.g., the mediating effects of social and academic performance; the relationship of such central characteristics as self esteem and ego strength to feelings of civic competence; and personality development and identity crises as they bear on value formation and change.

6. Temporal qualities of life cycle and generational variations--e.g., the staging of cognitive and affective structures; the permeability of early-formed values; the nature of resocialization and desocialization; distinguishing life cycle from generational differences; ascertaining the roots of generational gaps; the impact of secular and exogenous factors in changing the values of the young.

7. Spatial qualities of cross-national and intra-national variations--e.g., comparisons between Western and non-Western systems; true cultural differences versus artifactual differences; relative importance of value orientations in the scheme of things for different systems; regional, subcultural, and social strata variations within a system.

8. Implications of value formation and development for the political system--e.g., functional and dysfunctional properties; contribution to stability and change; integrating and divisive consequences; development of participation roles and power allocations.

Ideally I would be able to respond to each of these topics with an appropriate synopsis. The truth of the matter is that scholars are just now at the dawn of knowledge about political learning. Information is more complete in some areas than in others. The next section contains an abbreviated survey of American research. Fortunately, several more elaborate summaries, of both direct and indirect relevance, are available (Dawson, 1966; Patrick, 1967; Dennis, 1968; Wasby, 1966).

Recent Trends in Research

Scholarship in political socialization has followed a not uncommon path for newly developed fields. On the one hand stands the grand theorizing which rests on a fragile empirical base. This has been particularly true of what might be called the "systems theorists." These people are basically interested in what keeps a system together. It is said that the acquisition of values and roles compatible with the needs and norms of the system is one such system maintenance device. In explicating inter-system differences, some scholars of comparative politics have been especially inclined to use differential patterns of value systems (and the learning thereof) as explanatory factors, even in the absence of systematic empirical evidence.

At the other end of the continuum is the literature which is characterized by some basic mapping of the empirical terrain. Since much of our former thinking about the origins of political values rested on hunches, conventional wisdom, myths, and occasional shrewd extrapolations, one of the first tasks was to gather and present basic descriptive data. Most

often--as suggested above--these data have dealt with phenomena found to be important in the political behavior of adults. Two major strands of research are apparent thus far. One features the developmental approach, wherein great stress is placed on the unfolding of value acquisition as the child matures; the sequential patterns assume prominence. Longitudinal and quasi-longitudinal study designs are most apt here, although virtually all research to date has been of the latter type.

The second mode of empirical work has focussed more on source or agent phenomena. Attention has been directed to conditions under which the child acquires certain orientations and the relative and differential contributions of these agents at different stages in the child's growth. Either static or time series studies are appropriate, with the former predominating thus far.

Certainly the empirical work has not proceeded completely unguided by theoretical considerations, and the theory has not been untouched by data. But such theories as there are seem to be macro theories (paradigms is perhaps more apt) of political systems rather than micro or intermediate theories of political learning, political socialization, value formation and conflict, and so forth. As work continues and some of the basic mapping is completed, it is probable that more efforts will be made to meld theory and data, to develop more relevant theories, and to probe more complex substantive areas.

If I were to fault the direction of research on elementary and secondary school students at this early stage, it would stem from my belief that the more pathologic aspects of political socialization are being slighted. In an understandable desire to comprehend the modal, functional patterns of political behavior in our society, most investigators (present author included) have avoided some less pleasant aspects. I refer to such matters as the bruised socio-political personalities coming out of the family and the school; the nature of interpersonal, intergroup, and interracial strife; the indoctrination and practice of "anti-democratic" values; the presence of political alienation and estrangement; the stifling of self-actualization and self-fulfillment among the poor and not-so-poor; either excessive deference to or defiance of authority figures; and the recruitment and socialization of young criminals. Now I realize some of these terms are controversial and some do not have obvious political content. Yet I see them all as having a bearing on the ultimate well-being of the political system and its members. Thus far political scientists have tended to leave such topics to other social scientists who do not have a primary interest in political socialization as such.

Following Hyman's Political Socialization (1959) and work which was commencing simultaneously, political scientists, sociologists, psychologists, and educators began to research the general terrain. Nevertheless, thorough studies dealing with the political socialization of adolescents are still extremely rare. In the realm of political values at least two of the investigations have questioned the democratic nature of the belief systems acquired by adolescents (Remmers, 1963; Pock, 1967). Furthermore, those students destined for elite positions in society were already more supportive of civil libertarian values than those with lesser prospects. But it has been shown, too, that high school students are, if anything, more trusting about parts of the governmental system and more "democratic" than are adults (Jennings, Kilpatrick, and Cummings, 1966: Jennings and Niemi, 1968; Jennings, 1966). It has been argued, and some evidence supports the argument, that political values do not serve as a fulcrum of adolescent rebellion in the American culture (Lane, 1959; Middleton and Putney, 1963; Maccoby, 1954; Easton and Hess, 1961; Jennings and Niemi, 1968).

Uncertainty exists about how much change in political orientations occurs during the high school years. A pilot study in the Chicago area suggested relatively little alteration in some values and practices from grades 9-12 (Hess and Torney, 1967; Easton and Hess, 1961). On the other hand there is little doubt that 12th graders have a greater storehouse of knowledge than do 9th graders. Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that great strides in cognitive development occur during these years and that this is related to more sophisticated conceptions of the political community (Adelson and O'Neil, 1966).

Other approaches center on such factors as extracurricular affairs, the student culture, and compositional variables of the school. The important question of the impact of extracurricular activities was examined by Ziblatt (1965) with somewhat mixed findings concerning their relationship to political efficacy. Although the application of the "climate hypothesis" to political socialization is infrequent (an exception is Levin, 1961), the theoretical importance of this variable looms large. Coleman (1961) among others has demonstrated the utility of the "crowd" concept and the adolescent culture concept in studying the behavior of teen-agers. In a work of direct interest, Rosenberg (1962, 1965) reported that students with low self-esteem were not as concerned with public affairs as were students with high self-esteem.

Much has been written (e.g., Friedenberg, 1962; Kozol, 1967; Schrag, 1967; Patterson, 1960), about the deleterious effect of the authority and compliance system of the school on the development of citizenship norms and psychological well-being. For some observers such outcomes represent the major pathology of the schools, and far outweigh the impact of formal instruction. Although not supported by rigorous research, this is a provocative and serious thesis worth exploration. In a similar vein, the self-image of teachers and their handling of political materials suggests profound effects on those teen-agers under their charge (Zeigler, 1967; Jennings and Zeigler, 1967).

A major focus of adolescent socialization inquiries, primarily outside the political behavior domain, has been the family. Socio-economic status of the family has been frequently employed as an explanatory variable (Kohn, 1963; Coleman, 1961; Sewell, 1963; Remmers, 1963; Langton, 1967). There is, of course, a great amount of retrospective data of this type in political studies. On a more socio-psychological plane, several studies of pre-adult development have suggested the importance of affective and control structures as key components of value transmission, role-modelling, and personality development (e.g., Strauss, 1964; Becker, 1964; Elder, 1963; Douvan and Gold, 1966; Maccoby, 1954; Bronfenbrenner, 1961, 1962). Although these latter characteristics have not been utilized extensively in political studies, experience in other domains suggests their possible utility.

In the political area it has been shown that the direct transmission of values from parent to child is quite variable over a range of values, thus qualifying somewhat the contention that the family is all-powerful (Jennings and Niemi, 1968). A further elaboration is that mothers have a greater role than previously granted them in inculcating the young with political values (Jennings and Langton, 1968). Both political and socio-psychological characteristics of the family affect the rates of transmission and the differential influence of mothers versus fathers.

In contrast to the primarily fragmentary studies of political socialization among high school students, two studies of elementary school children have provided the foundation for initial generalizations about young children. Greenstein (1965, 1960), in a quasi-longitudinal investigation, noted the early predominance of affective over cognitive

learning, the emergence of conspicious public officials as major objects first learned about, the seeming importance of the earliest-learned orientations for later behavior, and the social class and sex differences associated with political socialization.

From a much larger study, also employing a quasi-longitudinal design, Dennis, Easton, Hess, and Torney have made similar, but more conclusive findings (Easton and Hess, 1962; Easton and Dennis, 1965; Hess and Easton, 1962; Hess and Torney, 1967). It will be instructive to report the major findings of this study because they will probably be taken as the baseline for estimating the development of political ideas and information among elementary school children. The interpretation and explanation of the results will be different according to who is reporting them and evaluating them. There is, for example, a quite different emphasis coming out of the Hess and Torney version of the study (1967) and that by Easton and Dennis (1965, 1967). Nevertheless the descriptive information itself should remain relatively unequivocal.

The data for this study come from questionnaires administered to 12,000 white children, grades 2-8, located in 8 cities and 32 schools across the United States. Perhaps as good a way as any to summarize the developmental findings from the inquiry is to quote from the synopsis found in the volume by Hess and Torney (1967, pp. 91-92):

"The pattern of age changes during the elementary-school years is clear evidence that much of the process of political socialization occurs at the pre-high school level."

"The child's relationship to the country is established early and depends heavily on national symbols such as the flag and the Statue of Liberty. The child's attachment to the governmental system is achieved through attachment to personal figures, particularly the President. This feeling of positive regard is later transferred to institutions of the system as these objects become more clearly defined."

"Induction into a pattern of compliance with authority and law occurs through visible authority figures--the President and the local policeman. The young child believes that punishment is an inevitable consequence of wrongdoing, but this view declines with age in favor of a more realistic opinion."

"Information about the rights of citizens and a consequent sense of efficacy develop relatively late in the elementary-school years. The basis for this emerging sense of efficacy is probably the implicit trust that children have in the benevolence of government. However, many types of influence are unfamiliar to the child. He knows little about the role of pressure groups in legislation and formation of policy and has a very high opinion of the power of the individual citizen. Older children see citizen involvement as important; this is matched by an increasing tendency for children to engage in political activities as they grow older. By the end of elementary school, most children have acquired some interest in government and have participated in discussions about its policies."

"Increasingly with age, children see voting as the most central feature of our governmental processes and recognize the citizen's obligation to vote. Their understanding of the role of political parties in elections is vague and tends to develop relatively late . . . . The child's party preference most frequently matches his family's and is apparently faciliated by the child's identification of favored candidates as belonging to one party or the other. However, the majority of children believe that firm commitment to a party should be deferred until adulthood. The proportion of children who report that they would vote independently of party affiliation is large and increases with age. Children begin engaging in political activities, such as wearing campaign buttons, in the early grades; the number of politically active children increases through the eighth grade."

Hess and Torney go on to look at factors beyond grade advancement which affect political learning in the child. These include the family versus the school, religious affiliation and peer groups, social class and intelligence and sex roles. Of central concern to educators is their conviction about the primacy of the educational system in the socialization process:

"From the viewpoint of the totality of socialization into the political system, these results indicate that the effectiveness of the family in transmitting attitudes has been overestimated in previous research. The family transmits preference for a political party, but in most other areas its most effective role is to support other institutions in teaching political information and orientations . . . . The school

apparently plays the largest part in teaching attitudes, conceptions, and beliefs about the operation of the political system. While it may be argued that the family contributes much to the socialization that goes into basic loyalty to the country, the school gives content, information, and concepts which expand and elaborate these early feelings of attachment." (p. 217)

That the elementary child changes considerably is undeniable on the basis of this inquiry. In this respect this study (and Greenstein's) has introduced a major revolution in our thinking about the formation of political values and skills. That all or most of the development observed in the elementary youngster is attributable to the school system per se is a more debatable point, and one exceedingly hard to demonstrate under any conditions, but especially so since the study was not designed to do this. At the very least, however, one can agree that much development does occur during grades 2-8, and that the school supplies a lot of the raw material of civic education.

High School Students and Exposure to the Social Studies

The remainder of this paper will consider one particular aspect of the education system-political socialization nexus as it occurs at the high school level. Rather than examine the developmental pattern, as in the elementary school studies, attention will be focussed on high school seniors, their exposure to social studies courses, and the impact of these courses on their political orientations. The reason for dwelling on the social studies courses lies in the formal civic education responsibilities vested in them and the inherent nature of the course content. While civic education undoubtedly occurs in non-social studies classes also (to say nothing of other parts of the school environment) it is patent that the major thrust of the civic

education curriculum rests in the social studies. Data to be utilized come from a study conducted by the Survey Research Center in the spring of 1965. Interviews were held with a national probability sample of 1669 high school seniors (located in 97 schools), their parents, social studies teachers, and school principals.

American educators have long given the social studies a prominence in the secondary school not found in most other nations. A fairly basic pattern was established in the early part of the twentieth century, a pattern which has shown remarkable longevity. World History, American History, and American Government or Problems of Democracy have been the stock in trade for a number of decades. Yet new courses have crept into the curriculum and new content has been latched on to old course titles. And for all the uniformity, schools do differ in what they make available to their students (Jennings, 1967).

Just how much social studies do the students receive and what kinds of courses do they take? By taking the experiences of the high school seniors as they are preparing to graduate we can construct an outline which will answer those questions. During our interviews with the twelfth graders they indicated which social studies courses they had actually taken during grades 10-12. We allocated the courses into ten broad categories, as shown in Table 1. Most of the categories are self-explanatory, but two need clarification. American Problems includes the familiar Problems of Democracy course, plus such occasional titles as Contemporary Problems, Social Problems, and Problems of

American Life. Specialized World History embraces courses outside the standard World History course as, for example, European History, Asian History, and World Cultures. A course title is not a foolproof guide to the content of the course, but there appears to be a general symmetry between course titles and the type of textbooks employed and topics covered.

Table 1 contains two types of information about social studies in the United States. The first column indicates the percentage of seniors who were attending schools where the various courses were part of the curriculum, either as a requirement or elective. There is a great range, with American History being ubiquitous and World History, American Government, and Economics being found in over three-fifths of the schools attended by the seniors. At a somewhat lower level are American Problems, specialized World History, Geography, and Sociology. Finally the "newcomers" of Psychology and International and Comparative Politics were available to less than one-fifth of the students.

Laid against these offerings are the percentages of students who had actually taken such courses (column 2). It is a rare student who gains his diploma without an encounter with American History. Beyond this subject, however, coverage is considerably less comprehensive, with World History, American Government-American Problems, and Economics exhibiting moderate strength. Of this latter group, Economics has probably shown the most gain during the post-World War II period. Sociology, though christened as the queen of the social sciences, is still seldom found in the high school

Table 1

A Comparison of Social Studies Offerings versus Exposures during Grades 10-12, for a National Sample of High School Seniors

| Course | Percent Attending A School Offering Course (N = 1927)[a] | Percent Who Have Taken Course (N = 1927) |
|---|---|---|
| American History | 98 | 98 |
| World History (general) | 80 | 53 |
| American Government | 62 | 43 |
| Economics | 65 | 30 |
| American Problems | 42 | 27 |
| World History (specialized) | 31 | 16 |
| Sociology | 30 | 12 |
| Geography | 30 | 06 |
| Psychology | 16 | 06 |
| International and Comparative Politics | 13 | 05 |

[a]This is a weighted N, made necessary by the unavoidable problem of constructing a sampling frame based on varying degrees of precise school enrollment figures.

student's repertory. This is even more true of Psychology--by all odds the largest of the behavioral sciences at the professional and academic level. What emphasis contemporary students receive on international relations and world politics has to come through other courses, for there are precious few students who take (or have available) courses specifically designed for this. The low percentage for Geography is primarily a function of the fact that most students now take Georgraphy during either the eighth or ninth grades.

In sum, what the high school student of the 60's was receiving in the way of social studies bore the heavy imprint of the traditional pattern. Whereas the college curriculum during the past decades was heavily infiltrated by the behavioral sciences, the secondary schools responded only very slowly to changing intellectual and practical interests. For the student going on to college, this gap may not be crucial because it can be bridged during the college years. Of more concern, are those not going further and those who have already left school. In essence, the dominant type of "social science" they will have had is History and American Government. Although trend data are not handy, it does appear that the classic configuration of course exposure is beginning to erode. And it is likely that the traditional courses are undergoing alteration, though surely not rapidly or vigorously enough to suit the critics of the traditional curriculum and the proponents of the "new" social studies (e.g., Fenton, 1967; Mehlinger, 1967; Gibson, 1967; Massialas and Cox, 1966; Oliver and Shaver, 1966).

Another way of approaching the diet of social studies is to look at the sheer volume of courses absorbed by the students. Overall the mean for our seniors was 3.08, and the mode was three courses (bottom row, Table 2). Clearly one cannot charge the American educational system with depriving its users of a goodly quantity of social studies. A question of immediate interest is whether there are any systematic differences among students in the number of courses they have taken. For example, do students in different parts of the country, in different types of schools, or from diverse families consume a heavier diet of social studies?

A number of prominent individual and school characteristics are crossed against course exposure in Table 2. There are, without question, some moderate differences. Students who happened to be living in the West and Midwest received a heavier dose than those in Northeast and South. In fact these regional differences are the most marked of all those presented. Quantity also increased according to the degree of metropolitanism in which the school was located, in public versus nonpublic schools, and in schools with narrower grade spans and smaller senior class sizes (latter not shown). The academic quality of the school, as measured by the proportion of students enrolled in college preparatory programs, bears a curvilinear relationship to the course exposure. While the mean is lowest among the students in the least academic schools--and rises at the next two brackets--it tapers off among students in the top category. Using mother's education as an indicator of social status suggests that the volume of social studies is not appreciably affected by status backgrounds. As suspected, the rates are virtually identical for male and female students, and differences between whites and non-whites are also small.

It is not my purpose to try to account for these various patterns. They are bound up in reasons of state requirements, available resources, professional norms, and intellectual history. What is significant in terms of political socialization is that accidents of location, over which the student has no control, do make a difference in his exposure to subject matter designed to shape him as a citizen. It is also apparent that school systems in certain locations and having certain properties assign different priorities. Whether varying amounts of social studies actually "make a difference" is not at issue here. The central point is that the potential for exerting a greater influence on the socialization of the young is differentially distributed.

Table 2

Number of Social Studies Courses Taken, Grades 10-12 by a National Sample of High School Seniors, by Individual and School Characteristics

| Characteristics | Number of Courses Taken | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 0-2 | 3 | 4+ | Mean | N |
| | % | % | % | | |
| Region | | | | | |
| West | 15 | 47 | 38 | 3.39 | (330) |
| Midwest | 25 | 39 | 36 | 3.29 | (585) |
| Northeast | 27 | 49 | 25 | 3.02 | (464) |
| South | 40 | 44 | 16 | 2.64 | (548) |
| SMSA Type[a] | | | | | |
| Large | 26 | 36 | 38 | 3.69 | (449) |
| Medium | 31 | 38 | 30 | 3.06 | (662) |
| Non-SMSA | 27 | 53 | 20 | 2.99 | (816) |
| Type of School | | | | | |
| Public | 26 | 46 | 28 | 3.10 | (1728) |
| Nonpublic | 43 | 29 | 27 | 2.90 | (199) |
| Span of Grades | | | | | |
| 10-12 | 20 | 40 | 39 | 3.28 | (545) |
| 9-12 | 26 | 41 | 37 | 3.21 | (693) |
| 8-12+ | 36 | 50 | 14 | 2.76 | (690) |
| Proportion College Prep | | | | | |
| 60%+ | 29 | 39 | 32 | 3.08 | (536) |
| 50-59% | 25 | 34 | 41 | 3.28 | (391) |
| 30-49% | 24 | 50 | 24 | 3.05 | (563) |
| 0-29% | 31 | 52 | 17 | 2.92 | (435) |
| Mother's Education | | | | | |
| Elementary | 26 | 50 | 24 | 3.03 | (423) |
| Some High School | 30 | 44 | 26 | 3.00 | (358) |
| High School Grad | 24 | 43 | 32 | 3.18 | (512) |
| Some College or more | 34 | 36 | 30 | 3.03 | (455) |
| Sex | | | | | |
| Male | 27 | 44 | 29 | 3.08 | (995) |
| Female | 29 | 44 | 27 | 3.05 | (932) |
| Race | | | | | |
| White | 29 | 43 | 28 | 3.06 | (1728) |
| Negro | 17 | 56 | 27 | 3.22 | (199) |
| Grand Total | 28 | 44 | 28 | 3.08 | (1927) |

[a]Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area.

To this stage we have dealt with all the social studies. For political socialization inquiries it is defensible to restrict the courses to those in the American Government-American Problems area. This is not because important aspects of value and skill acquisition may not transpire in other social studies courses. Rather, it is the American Government and Problems courses that are directly oriented toward achieving these goals. These are the classic "civic education" courses.

Schools offering American Government usually do not offer a Problems course, and vice versa. Whereas the American Government courses focus heavily on the forms, structures, backgrounds, and traditions of American political life, the Problems courses emphasize a wider scope of socio-political activities, are more contemporary in nature, and are typically organized around major problems in American public life. Because of the different emphases and formats of the two courses, it has been advanced that they will have differential effects.

What is the incidence of these courses among high school seniors? Altogether 68% of the students had taken one or the other, with 43% having had an American Government course and 27% a Problems course. As in the case of the total number of social studies courses there are also differences in the degree of exposure to civics courses. Perhaps the most striking variations are by region and metropolitanism (Table 3, column 3). Great majorities of the students in the West and Midwest, about two-thirds of the Southerners, but slightly under two-fifths of the Northeastern residents had experienced

such a course. Similarly there is an inverse relationship between the metropolitan configuration and course exposure--the more metropolitan the area the less likely will the student have taken the course. Beyond these spatial characteristics the only other distributions in Table 3 showing much discrimination are those dealing with the academic calibre of the school (in terms of college prep proportions). Students in schools at each extreme less frequently took a civics course than those in the middle ranges.

Disguised in the overall frequencies are some contrasts between taking American Government versus American Problems (Table 3, columns 1 and 2). For example, Southern students took the Government course over the Problems course at a ratio of about 5:1. Northeastern students, by contrast, were much more exposed to the Problems than to the Government course, the ratio being about 4:1. Similarly, public school pupils more often found themselves in American Government whereas the nonpublic students were more frequently in American Problems. A final illustration is that Negro students--primarily because of their concentration in the South--had the Government course more often than did whites, even though whites had a slightly higher overall rate of exposure.

Again, it is not my desire to explicate these findings nor to impose a multivariate form of analysis. It is sufficient to point out that even though two-thirds of all students have taken a civics course during their last three years of high school, the probability of such exposure is not randomly spread throughout the country. Region, as a summary variable, appears to be the most determinate factor. Since civics courses tend to be required if present in the school curriculum, one must assume that the regional variations are functions of state and school system practices rather than being indicative of any special passion for or against the courses on the part of students.

Table 3

Proportion of Students Who Have Taken American Government, American Problems, or Either During Grades 10-12 by Individual and School Characteristics

| Characteristic | Percent Taking: American Government | American Problems | Either One[a] | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Region | % | % | % | |
| West | 53 | 38 | 88 | (330) |
| Midwest | 58 | 34 | 85 | (585) |
| South | 52 | 11 | 65 | (548) |
| Northeast | 07 | 30 | 37 | (464) |
| SMSA Type[b] | | | | |
| Non-SMSA | 47 | 30 | 75 | (816) |
| Medium | 48 | 20 | 67 | (662) |
| Large | 30 | 34 | 56 | (449) |
| Type of School | | | | |
| Public | 46 | 25 | 68 | (1728) |
| Nonpublic | 25 | 44 | 63 | (199) |
| Span of Grades | | | | |
| 10-12 | 48 | 30 | 71 | (545) |
| 9-12 | 38 | 26 | 64 | (693) |
| 8-12+ | 46 | 27 | 70 | (690) |
| Proportion College Prep | | | | |
| 60%+ | 46 | 32 | 58 | (538) |
| 50-59% | 40 | 42 | 78 | (391) |
| 30-49% | 42 | 34 | 72 | (563) |
| 0-29% | 45 | 23 | 66 | (435) |
| Mother's Education | | | | |
| Elementary | 44 | 26 | 70 | (439) |
| Some High School | 40 | 31 | 69 | (368) |
| High School Grad | 46 | 29 | 72 | (512) |
| Some College or more | 39 | 24 | 61 | (456) |
| Sex | | | | |
| Male | 44 | 25 | 67 | (995) |
| Female | 43 | 29 | 69 | (932) |
| Race | | | | |
| White | 42 | 29 | 68 | (1728) |
| Negro | 51 | 14 | 63 | (199) |
| Grand Total | 43 | 27 | 68 | (1927) |

[a]Includes a very small proportion taking esoteric civics courses in addition to or instead of American Government and American Problems.

[b]Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area.

The Effects of Civics Courses

Now that the distribution of civics exposure has been described we can turn to the crucial question of their impact. That is, are a student's political values, cognitions, and skills affected by course exposure. In selecting the particular political orientations to be analyzed we attempted to touch on many of the consistent themes in the "civics" literature which are germane for political science. Rather than examine only one or two variables, we elected to pursue a wide variety so that the possible variations in effects might be uncovered.[2]

1. Political knowledge and sophistication.--For better or worse, performance on factual examinations is a prime way in which the success of a course and teacher is evaluated. Students were asked six questions dealing with recent and contemporary political events and personalities. Another measure touching more directly on political sophistication, ascertained the students' perception of ideological differences between political parties.

2. Political interest.--A hallmark of the "shoulds" of political education in the United States is the shaping of citizens to take an active interest in political affairs. Although numerous studies of adults suggest that the schools and other socializing agents fall short of the goals envisioned by the authors of civics textbooks, it is nevertheless possible that these achievements would be even less impressive in the absence of intensive inculcation in the civics courses. Among many alternative measures of interest available in the interview protocols, we relied on the answers to a straightforward inquiry.

3. Spectator politicization.--A more direct measure of interest in political matters is the degree to which students consume political content in the mass media. If the civics curriculum spurs an interest in politics, it should be reflected in greater media consumption. Separate soundings were taken of the students' behavior vis-a-vis television, newspapers, and magazines.

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[2]The next few pages represent an abridgement and some revision of work originally found in Langton and Jennings (1967).

4. Political discourse.--Even more dramatic evidence of the success of the civics experience would be an upsurge in the pre-adult's level of politically-tinged dialogue. In view of the fact that there are relatively few ways in which the high school senior can (or does) assume active political roles, the frequency of political conversations is not an improbable surrogate for forms of adult-level political activity. For our purposes the student's report of the frequency with which he discusses politics with his peers was used.

5. Political efficacy.--The belief that one can affect political outcomes is a vital element of political behavior, and Easton and Dennis (1967) have demonstrated the rising sense of efficacy as the child progresses through elementary school. Much of civic education's thrust is toward developing a sense of civic competence. Efficacy was measured by the students' responses to two items.

6. Political cynicism.--While trying to create interest in politics and a sense of efficacy, the civics curriculum almost inevitably tries to discourage feelings of mistrust and cynicism toward the government. Indeed, cynicism seems in part to be antithetical to a feeling of civic competence. A six-item scale was used to arrange the students on a political cynicism dimension.

7. Civic tolerance.--Considerable discussion exists in the citizenship literature on the necessity for inculcating norms of civic tolerance. Even though the curriculum materials and the teachers often fail to grapple with the complexities of these norms, a proper and necessary role of civics courses is seen as creating support for the "Bill of Rights," due process, freedom of speech, recognition of legitimate diversity, and so forth. In order to probe the effect of exposure to civics courses on these types of beliefs, a three-item civic tolerance scale was devised.

8. Participative orientation.--Instilling a propensity toward participation in public life becomes especially evident as a civic education goal as the pre-adult approaches legal age. In particular, one might hypothesize that the participation ethic would displace a more basic and early-formed orientation such as loyalty to country. Responses to an open-ended question tapping the students' view of the "good citizen" form the basis of the participative-orientation measure.

One of the first points to be established in the analysis was that scant differences emerged as a consequence of whether the student had taken a more traditional American Government course or the more topically-oriented, wider ranging American Problems course. Aside from rather meager differences, students taking the two major types of courses were virtually indistinguishable in terms of their political orientations. Knowing this, we proceeded with some confidence to treat them (and those taking a sprinkling of other courses) together and to focus our analysis primarily on the amount of exposure, viz., none, one, or two courses during grades 10-12.

An overview of the results offers strikingly little support for the impact of the curriculum. It is true that the direction of the findings is generally consonant with the predictions advanced above. That is, the more civics courses the student has had the more likely he was to be knowledgeable, to be interested in politics, to expose himself to the political content of the mass media, to have more political discourse, to feel more efficacious, to espouse a participative (versus loyalty) orientation, and to show more civic tolerance. The possible exception to the pattern was the curvilinear relationship between course-taking and political cynicism. Thus, the claims made for the importance of the civic education courses in the senior high school are vindicated if one only considers the direction of the results.

However, it is perfectly obvious from the size of the correlations that the magnitude of the relationships are extremely weak, in most instances bordering on the trivial.[3] Taking even the highest correlation coefficient

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[3]Two forms of analysis were used--1) contingency tables and 2) multiple classification analysis, a technique having some properties of both multiple regression and analysis of variance techniques but not requiring linearity of regression.

generated means that only 1% of the variance in knowledge scores is explained by the amount of course exposure. The critics' contention that course-taking among older adolescents results in only incremental changes was borne out with a vengeance. Indeed, the increments were so minuscle as to raise serious questions about the utility of investing in government courses in the senior high school, at least as these courses are presently constituted.

Do these findings mean that the political orientations of pre-adults are essentially refractory to change during the senior high school years? This possibility cannot be easily dismissed. Certainly the pre-high school has already undergone, especially in the American context, several years of intensive formal and informal political socialization. He may have developed, by the time he reaches secondary school, a resistance to further formal socialization at this stage in his life cycle. But there is also an alternative or additional explanation. If the course work represents information redundancy, there is little reason to expect even modest alterations. By redundancy we mean not only repetition of previous instruction, though there is surely a surfeit of that. We mean also redundancy in the sense of duplicating cues from other information sources, particularly the mass media, formal organizations, and primary groups. Students not taking civics courses are probably exposed to these other sources in approximately the same doses as those enrolled in the courses. Assuming that this is the case, and that the courses provide relatively few new inputs, the consequence would be lack of differentiation between course takers and non-course takers.

It is certainly conceivable that these generally depressing findings would not hold for some portions of the high school senior population. For example, one might expect that a positive association between course exposure and political knowledge would be found only among students from less educated and less politicized families. This "sponge" theory maintains that children from more deprived families are less likely to be saturated with political knowledge and interest in the family environment; therefore, they are more likely to be affected by the civics curriculum when they enter high school. The counter-hypothesis is that it is the child from the more highly educated families who is most likely to have developed the minimal learning skills and sensitivity to politics which would allow him to respond to civics instruction.

Clearly, a number of other factors could affect the impact of the civics courses. Therefore, we performed our analysis while controlling for a number of variables of theoretical and practical interest. These included the quality of the school, the student's academic ability, number of history courses taken, sex, parental education, and parental politicization, and the student's basic interest in politics and public affairs. Without going into detail on the results, it is sufficient to say that the original simple relationships between civics exposure and the various political orientations were seldom altered. That is, regardless of the particular types of students being considered, the effects of course-taking were persistently negligible. On the assumption that other social studies courses might be related to

differing political orientations, we divided the students according to the sheer number of all social studies courses to which they had been exposed in grades 10-12. Again, the results revealed only a particle of difference amongst the students so divided.

For these reasons it would be well to look at courses and teachers which do not generate information redundancy. That is the virtue of examining the finer grain of teacher performance and course content. Another strategy, and one which we adopted would be to look at subpopulations of pre-adults in general. Less redundancy could be occasioned either by infusion of new information where relatively little existed before, or by information which conflicts with information coming from other sources.

Among the universe of subpopulations one could utilize, none is as distinctive perhaps as that of the Negro minority. The unique situation of Negroes in American social and political life and the dynamics now at work have been well-documented. Because of cultural differences between the White majority and the Negro minority, the frequent exclusion of Negroes from socio-political life, the contemporary civil rights ferment, and the less privileged position of Negroes in our society, it seems likely that information redundancy would occur less often among the Negro pre-adults.

When White and Negro students were observed separately, it became clear that the curriculum exerted considerably more influence on the latter. On several measures the effect was to move the Negro youths--especially those from less-educated families--to a position more congruent with the

White youths and more in consonance with the usual goals of civic education in the United States. With respect to some quasi-participative measures, taking a civics course served to depress their performance, especially those from better-educated families. In virtually all instances the Negro students were much more affected by taking such courses than were the Whites, regardless of whether the results were positive or negative.

One explanation of the singular consequence of the curriculum upon Negro students is that information redundancy is lower for them than for White students. Because of cultural and social status differences, the Negro students are more likely to encounter new or conflicting perspectives and content. The more usual case for Whites is a further layering of familiar materials which, by and large, repeat the message from other past and contemporary sources. It is conceivable that other subpopulations of students are differentially affected by the curriculum; that variations in content and pedagogy lead to varying outcomes; or that there will be delayed consequences from course exposure.

In the main one is hard pressed to find evidence of any immediate course impact on the bulk of the students. The programmatic implications of this conclusion are forceful. If the educational system continues to invest sizable resources in government and civics courses at the secondary level--as seems most probable--there must be a radical restructuring of these courses in order for them to have any appreciable pay-off. Changes in goals, course content, pedagogical methods, timing of exposure, teacher training, and school environmental factors are all points of leverage. Until such changes come about, one must continue to expect little contribution from the formal civics curriculum in the political socialization of American pre-adults.

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